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SOCIETIES

NEW YORK BRANCH OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

THE New York Branch of the American Psychological Association met in conjunction with the Section of Anthropology and Psychology of the New York Academy of Sciences on the evening of November 22, at Columbia University. Four papers were read, abstracts of which follow.

Some Relation Between Memory-Span, Attention, School-Grade, and Age.—CHARLES K. TAYLOR.

A series of experiments were made with about 500 children in the four upper grades of a public school, as a result of which interesting relations seemed to appear between memory-span, attention, school-grade, and age.

Groups of numbers, varying from three to twelve digits, were dictated to the children who wrote from memory each number as soon as it was dictated. While this was going on the class-room was made as quiet as possible and free from disturbing elements. Two series of numbers, ten numbers to the series, were given under these conditions. Not more than two or three children, it was found, could remember and write down a number of twelve digits after dictation, a few more remembered eleven, more remembered ten, and so on.

It was found, first, that the average numbers remembered by the different grades were larger as the grades advanced in age. It was also found that of children of the same age in different grades, those in the lower grades could not remember as large numbers as those in higher grades. Also, there was a close correspondence between the memory average of the children and their averages given in the monthly reports.

After a period of rest, two more series of numbers were dictated, similar to the first two, but this was done while the teacher read aloud from an interesting book, thus making a disturbing element. By comparing averages in the two sets of series one could gain an idea as to the attentive powers of the children.

It was found that, though there was some relation between the school-report and "attention" and the school-grade and "attention," the most marked relation seemed to be between age and attention. For instance, all of the sixteen-year children did as well with the disturbing element, or better, than with the quiet. Only 42 per cent. of the fourteen-year children and only 32 per cent. of the twelve-year children did as well or better with the disturbing element as they did without it. With the children of eleven and under all made poorer averages with the disturbing element than without it.

Color Therapy.—T. H. AMES.

References brought together, ranging from the most ancient superstitions and folk-lore to modern material from psychological laboratories, give evidence that color was used to conciliate or ward off supernatural beings, to ameliorate abnormal physical and mental conditions and to change the emotional states of normal people.

Color acts for these ends in various ways: By magical charms or sorcery, as a scape-goat, by thinking processes, or by homeopathic and allopathic procedure.

Not only are masses and individuals affected in a similar manner by color, but also the masses and individuals of all nations and all times. The experiment by Wells in the *Psychological Bulletin* of 1910 stating that colors at the red end of the spectrum are stimulating, that those in the central part are tranquilizing, and those at the purple end subduing, agrees in its results with those to be obtained from a study of ancient superstitions.

While the uses of color never have been and may never be demonstrated to be of such value as to become commercialized, still there is sufficient evidence to warrant us in believing that apart from any purely ulilitarian or purely esthetic use, color has a place in therapeutics.

Why the Lower Senses are Unesthetic.—H. L. HOLLINGWORTH.

The speaker reviewed the various reasons that have been suggested in explanation of the unesthetic value of the lower senses. Such factors as abundance, ecclesiastic censorship, number of qualities, sharpness of discrimination, reaction time, inertia and life-span, spatial characteristics, immediate affective value, materiality, consumption of stimulus, utilitarian function, ontogenetic and philogenetic development, vividness of imagery, organization and systematic relations within the modality, social character, range of stimulus, perceptual value, tendency to adaptation, etc., were considered. Criticisms were offered of the theory that "the function of art is to please" and the intellectual character or "meaning" function of esthetic manipulation was emphasized.

A Practise Experiment.—M. J. VAN WAGENEN.

Table I. gives the Pearson coefficients between the work done at various parts of two practise periods and a final test period. The material consisted of a set of ten paired associates, the stimuli being the first ten letters of the alphabet arranged in chance order, the associates being the next ten letters, also arranged in chance order.

The subjects were forty university students in a class in elementary psychology, who practised two periods of thirty-two minutes each, forty-seven hours apart, and for three minutes forty-seven hours later.

The three-minute test was followed by another practise period on a new set of paired associates, the stimuli consisting of the original first ten letters arranged in a new chance order, the associates consisting of the digits 0 to 9, also arranged in chance order. The results are given in Table II.

TABLE I

Minutes	Period	Minutes	Period	r
4–8	First	26–30	First	.780
4–8	First	33–37	Second	.698
4–8	First	58–62	Second	.515
26–30	First	58–62	Second	.820
26–30	First	65–67	Test (third)	.880[1]

TABLE II

Minutes	Period	Associates	Minutes	Period	Associates	r
4–8	First	Letter-digit	4–8	First	Letter-letter	.615[2]
4–8	First	Letter-digit	65–67	Third	Letter-letter	.531[3]

A second experiment was carried out with a group of thirty-four summer-session university students, in which the same letter-letter associates were used as in the previous experiment, and in which the quantity of work done, instead of the time, was kept constant. During the first practise period 120 associations were made with each pair. Four weeks later 80 more associations were made with each pair. Just before the second practise period the amount that could be recalled during 200 seconds was measured, the amount being the number of correct associates that were recalled when the stimulus letters were read in varied order two seconds apart. The results are given in Tables III. and IV.

TABLE III

Minutes	Period	Minutes	Period	r
4–8	First	26–30	First	.727[4]
4–8	First	Last five	First	.753
4–8	First	4–8	Second	.541
4–8	First	Last five	Second	.604
Last five	First	Last five	Second	.845

[1] Only thirty-five subjects were present for this test. The method of rank differences was used in finding this coefficient while the product-moments method was used in finding the other coefficients.

[2] Thirty-seven subjects.

[3] Thirty-four subjects.

[4] Probably too low as the last five minutes were used in two cases where the work was finished during the 27th minute.

TABLE IV

Amount recalled	Shortness of first practise period	r = .186
Amount recalled	Amount done during minutes 4–8	.231
Amount recalled	Rate of work during last five minutes of first practise period	.355
Amount recalled	Rate of work during last five minutes of second practise period	.533

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

The Great Problems. Bernardino Varisco. Translated by R. C. Lodge. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1914. Pp. xi + 370.

Varisco's "Great Problems" is a vigorously written and closely reasoned book. It will be differently appraised according to the different philosophical points of view of its readers; but few will deny the soundness of Varisco's definition of philosophy (p. 4) as "the search and knowledge of the supreme truth" and the correctness of his formulation (p. 8) of its aim "to render full reason for everything."

In the first of several appendices Varisco defines his present standpoint in technical terms. "To make an indeterminate profession of idealism," he says (p. 295), "is . . . like signing a blank cheque, and I have no wish to do so." In particular, he disavows every form of idealism which leads to solipsism. But with this qualification he asserts positively "I am an idealist."

A brief outline of some of the more significant teachings of the book will define more closely Varisco's type of idealism and will also provide a basis for comment. He is first concerned to defend the possibility of philosophy, conceived as search for ultimate truth, against the "critical doctrine" that reality is unknowable. "With the assertion," he says (p. 16), "that the 'beyond' is unknowable comes the affirmation that it exists. A 'beyond' of which we know the existence is not an absolutely unknown thing—is not unknowable. . . . Positive knowledge," Varisco concludes, "contains, without doubt, the solution of the Great Problems. . . . But . . . in order that positive knowledge may lead us where we wish to go . . . we must make a well-thought-out use of it" (p. 21).

Philosophical theory, Varisco proceeds, must be based simply on facts: "We must refrain from any theory which goes beyond the fact" (p. 48). And the fact first discovered is that a body, a so-called "external reality" —an inkstand or a flower, for example—is a complex of properties, that is, of sense-perceivables. But, a sense-perceivable, as, for instance, the red color of the flower, is "numerically one" (p. 32) with a sense-percept (my sensation of redness). In a word, a body is "nothing but a group of facts